Decolonizing Interfaith:
A Qualitative Study Exploring the Operative Assumptions and Categories of
Interfaith Interaction

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Hypothesis and Scope:

Interfaith programs and organizations in the United States serve as a key way of reducing the violence caused by religious conflict and moving the national community toward reconciliation.[1] Unfortunately, such programs are often carried out with a comparative[2] approach, looking for connections in similarity at the expense of deep difference. I argue that interfaith projects cannot carry out the reconciliatory project imagined by most interfaith leaders without attention to difference.

Eboo Patel, founder of the Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC), runs a model which focuses on "common action for the common good," preferring to leave direct engagement on religious topics to the background and focus on service projects to build relationships *across* traditions.[3] Patel is thus exemplary of what Christian theologian Paul Knitter labels the "mutuality model" of engagement with pluralism, in which relationship is more important than plurality, and God's universal love and presence in all religions receives more focus than the distinctions that separate religious traditions in the first place.[4] Local chapters of the Gülen Movement, founded by Turkish scholar

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[1] Reconciliation itself has its own history, especially in Restorative Justice programs and Christian ministry. In this case, I use the term more broadly to refer to the project of bringing former antagonists together in peace and tolerance.

[2] Jonathan Z. Smith, "In Comparison a Magic Dwells," in Patton, Kimberley C (Kimberley Christine), Benjamin C. Ray and American Council of, Learned Societies, *A Magic Still Dwells : Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age* (Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley, Calif. : University of California Press, 2000). It is Smith's contention that the main foci of the comparative religions project (memory and magic) eventually divested themselves of the uninteresting category of *difference* and instead focused on the relevance of similarity and contiguity, which eventually became "deeply embedded in Western discourse" as we know it today.

[3] Eboo Patel, "The Framework," Interfaith Youth Core Website, Accessed May 30, 2017, https://www.ifyc.org./about

[4] Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Maryknoll, N.Y. : Orbis Books, 2002),109ff.

Fethullah Gülen, operate under a similar premise: Gülen calls for "[increasing] the

interests we have in common with other people"[5] through interfaith dialogue. Christian

theologian Catherine Cornille, who is often a key referent for Christian-based interfaith

engagement, insists that "interreligious dialogue presupposes a conviction that in spite

of important and ineradicable differences in belief and practices, religions may find one

another in a *common ground.*"[6] "Common ground" may help initiate conversation, but

without attention to difference, such an approach often results in a "creeping

imperialism,"[7] a normalizing of the similarities used as a basis for conversation. In other

words, the "rules of order" for interreligious engagement are often seen as universal

ideas and concepts, when in fact they are imposed by the dominant tradition and

subsequently taken for granted.

These "universal" ideas and concepts need to be interrogated in the case of

interfaith interaction, as the latter is deeply indebted both to a belief-oriented rational

Protestant Christianity and to a Euro-Western dominant narrative born out of the

colonial enterprise. Getting to know one's neighbor as a means of ending harmful

generalizations and negative stereotypes is often approached by highlighting the

individual and lauding the human connections we all share, the assumed universal

applicability of which have emerged out of Protestant Christian trajectories of human

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[5] M. Fethullah Gülen, *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*, (New Jersey: The Light, Inc. and Isik Yayinlan, 2006), 72. See also Helen Rose Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement*Dordrecht : Springer Netherlands : Imprint: Springer, 2010), 38-40.

[6] Catherine Cornille, *The Im-Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: New York : Crossroad Pub. Co, 2008), 95.

[7] Knitter, 157.

subjectivity.[8] I am seeking to decolonize interfaith projects by examining the underlying

power structures, language, and assumptions of participants and leaders of current

models and programs of interfaith interaction. How does the cultural foundation of

Christianity in the West (its status-quo position) influence interfaith programming,

whether negatively or positively? What damage does a neglect of interrogation of the

categories of inclusion ("religion," "belief/faith") do to increase exclusion from the

conversation? What connections are there between humanist/universalist rhetoric and

the Protestant legacy? My hypothesis is: *The status-quo position of Christianity in the*

West has led to an unexamined discourse of interfaith/interreligious interaction that

promotes exclusion and surface-level engagement, impediments to the ultimate aims of

interfaith interaction.

A note on terms and scope:

Interfaith vs. *Interreligious:* I generally use interfaith and interreligious interchangeably,

because they both refer to the practice of interacting with a religious "other." In truth,

the two terms have different emphases. Inter*religious* tends to identify practices

between and among religions, those traditions usually based in some sort of

institution. Inter*faith* is supposedly a more open-ended term because it permits those

who have some sort of belief or faith outside of institutional boundaries. Both terms,

however, are indebted to the categorical development of "religion," which presumes a

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[8] A useful overview of this process can be found in Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (1989), which explores the development of modern subjectivity out of the very trajectory to which I refer above. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self : The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1989).

doctrine and belief approach (as opposed to practice and ritual approach) to experiences with transcendence. Both terms are therefore dependent on the same Western Christian trajectory that yielded the category of "religion."[9] Regardless of their origin, both interfaith and interreligious are used in both the literature and among practitioners to describe the practices I am interrogating in this project.

Status-quo Christianity: I use this term as a way of reminding the reader that Christianity historically held and currently holds pride of place in the West. Although Christianity is not established within the government, it has power within Western society because many of the values of modern secular culture have grown from Protestant Christianity and have been instantiated as values in their own right. Because of this Protestant dominance, Christians have enjoyed the ability to experience their values and ideals as normative and largely unchallenged.[10]

Interfaith interaction: The most general term engaged in this project will be "interfaith interaction," which simply refers to any sort of engagement with a religious "other." Interaction may include any number of approaches, including service/philanthropic projects, seminars, explicit curricula on learning about a religion or practice, and the most popular practice of dialogue. While interfaith/interreligious *dialogue* is often a part of models and programs of interfaith interaction it is not always the main focus of

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[9] Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions.* See also David Chidester, *Empire of Religion : Imperialism and Comparative Religion*, ed. Ebooks CorporationChicago ; London : The University of Chicago Press, 2014).

[10] This isn't to say that some Christians don't feel threatened. There are many Evangelicals and conservative Christians who feel that secular culture is a challenge to their values, (Smith 1998; Yukich 2010, 172-196). This challenge, however, is mostly to be seen in conservative social values rather than in deeper held assumptions about the world, like the importance of the individual.

interfaith organizations. To address this, I broaden my terminology to include a variety

of interactions, though I do pay particular attention to the practice of dialogue itself, as

often embodying the most deeply held assumptions and values of the people and

organizations who engage in it.

Importance of Topic and Contribution:

As interfaith/interreligious dialogue is both a lived religious practice and an

academic discourse (with corresponding degrees and programs in Interfaith Studies), it

is important to further interrogate the categories upon which it stands so that it can do

the work it claims to do. While "common ground" approaches to interfaith interaction

yield admirable philanthropic efforts, they tend to create shallow or unsustainable

relationships because they do not engage and affirm the very real differences between

participants. Therefore, they perpetuate the exclusivity created by premising interfaith

interaction on the specific conception of "religion" on which Western discourse has

relied. As a result, atheists, humanists, the spiritual but not religious, seculars, nones

and multiple religious belongers are often left out of the interfaith project. [11] In addition,

the debt to status-quo Western (rational and doctrinal) Christianity means that the

impetus to interfaith interaction has come from a very specific segment of the population

(typically racially, socioeconomically, and politically homogenous), such that the

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[11] This long list of various terms for those who consider themselves outside of institutional religion comes out of the recent swathe of studies, reports, and qualitative research aiming to explore the phenomenon of the rising "nones." See, for example, (Jones and others 2016; Funk and Smith 2012; Drescher 2016; Baker 2015; Mercadante 2014) .

communities perceived as the greatest challenges to mutual coexistence and violence reduction (so-called fundamentalists or evangelicals) are not a part of the conversation.

My research will help to understand these challenges and deconstruct the romantic mythos of egalitarian pluralism that encourages common-ground efforts. By paying attention to the effects of status-quo Christianity on interfaith interaction through qualitative research, I can begin to determine whether and how this Christian dominance has led to the shortcomings in current interfaith practices.

Prior Research:

From within the social sciences, research on interfaith interaction has mostly focused on its effects, rather than its primary causes or assumptions. For example, research has focused on the effects of interfaith interaction on marriage (Fishman 2010; Sahl and Batson 2011; Horowitz 1999; Yahya et al. 2016; Cila and Lalonde 2014; Winter 2002) , on out-group prejudice (Leak and Finken 2011; Johnson, Rowatt, and Labouff 2012; Merino 2010) , on religious expression (Yukich and Braunstein 2014), on its implications for the social nature of religion (Ysseldyk, Matheson, and Anisman 2010; Mccormack 2013) , and perhaps most prolifically, on the effects of interfaith interaction on spirituality, diversity, and engagement on college campuses (Mayhew, Bowman, and Rockenbach 2014; Rockenbach and Mayhew 2014; Bowman and Smedley 2013; Rockenbach 2012; Clark 2011; Rockenbach et al. 2015; Mayhew et al. 2016). This empirical research is all useful and has led to a deeper understanding of the social aspects of interfaith work, but it doesn't engage in analysis of the theoretical aspects.

The absences in the social sciences are more than present within the field of Religious Studies, in which theory is generally more prevalent than empirical work. Many categories of research engage interfaith interaction, including comparative religion (Smith 1991; Smith 2003; Pummer 1977; Prothero 2011; Patton and Ray 2000) interfaith dialogue guides or manuals (Shafiq and Abu-Nimer 2007; Thompson 2016; Berling 2004; Orton 2016; Swidler 1983), and perhaps most abundantly, Christian approaches to the theology of interfaith interaction and pluralism (Thompson 2016; Holmes 2010; Pratt 2015; Lee 1992; Heim 1995; Raimon Panikkar 1999; Cornille 2008; Knitter 2002). These categories of research enhance both theoretical and practical aspects of participation in interfaith interaction.

For my own work, I use the theory engaged by religious studies scholars in concert with the empirical approaches engaged by social scientists to delve more deeply into the assumptions underlying the very concept of interfaith interaction itself. The guides and manuals, examinations of theological challenges, and comparisons among religious traditions along with the studies of the effects of interfaith interaction all presuppose a certain understanding of their common topic. Deconstructive and postcolonial approaches (Dubuisson 2003; Chidester 1996; Chidester 2014; McCutcheon 2001; Smith 2004; Smith 1982; Smith 1993; Scott 2004; Smith 1999) round out the research to interrogate those understandings, which I argue ultimately rely on the lingering effects of Western modernity and the colonial legacy.

Theoretical Foundations:

Problematically, many scholars of religion treat their subject as ahistorical, a universal thing in itself, not requiring analysis beyond comparison with its various manifestations. Beneath "interfaith" lies assumed definitions of what counts as religion and therefore presumptions of who is welcome to participate in the conversation. In order to deconstruct these underlying assumptions, I follow the work of Jonathan Z. Smith and Russell T. McCutcheon, who both operate from the position that any theory of religion must come from a place of contextually situated exploration.[12] Additionally, I rely upon the work of Tomoko Masuzawa, who explains the creation of "religion" as a category built upon Western understandings of Christianity *as* religion. The result has been that the religious criteria of Euro-Christianity serve as the most general form of religion. [13]

To further explore the problematic category of religion, I turn to postcolonial theory, which examines and questions dominant narratives of oppression and addresses the assumptions of religion as construct. David Chidester's work is helpful here, as he explicitly names religion as a category which came into being on the frontiers of colonialism, where contact with the "other" required a set of boundaries by which the colonizer could justify his dominion; those boundaries became

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[12] Russell T. McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers : Redescribing the Public Study of Religion* (Albany: Albany : State University of New York Press, 2001). "…like all other aspects of human behavior, those collections of beliefs, behaviors, and institutions we classify as "religion" can be conceptualized and then explained as thoroughly human activity, with no mysterious distillate left over." (xi)

[13] Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, Or, how European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 2005), 315.

religion.[14] Using a postcolonial lens permits me to name the lingering colonial legacy in contemporary conceptions of religion, conceptions which remain unquestioned but still in effect.

Both the deconstructive and postcolonial lenses are essential to engaging interfaith interaction with an aim toward identifying its underlying normative principles, but also in this process is a need to appreciate and affirm the experience of religious participants. Though this goes against McCutcheon's more sociological approach that dismisses insider views,[15] I do not believe one can give attention to a phenomenon like interfaith interaction without acknowledging the very real experiences people have. Therefore, this project will also integrate a lived religion approach, an approach which has emerged out of the Sociology of Religion discourse, and gives both attention and relevance to the experiences of everyday religious participation. Robert Orsi states beautifully in his own lived religion work that "what may be upsetting about the study of lived religion is that such research appears to align itself with the realness of religious worlds, with presence, thereby threatening to reawaken presence."[16] McCutcheon might assume that the reawakening of presence is inimical to solid research, but I believe it is not complete without it. It is toward including this presence and the

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[14]David Chidester, *Savage Systems : Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Charlottesville: Charlottesville : University Press of Virginia, 1996), xiii. . See also Chidester's *Empire of Religion* (2014).

[15] McCutcheon calls religious participants and theologians "data" rather than acknowledging their contributions and experiences (*Critics Not Caretakers,* xi). One might accuse McCutcheon of being a closet Freudian or Marxist who dismisses religious experience as illusory or palliative, except that he does seem to see value in *theorizing* about the variety of religious effects in the world (e.g. 104ff).

[16] Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth : The Religious Worlds People make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 2005), 158.

experience of religious participants that I have chosen to engage in qualitative research to deepen my analysis of interfaith interaction as carried out on the ground, rather than relying solely on written literature or on sociological studies treating religious participants as mere data.

Methodology:

The methodological approach to investigating the larger questions of this dissertation rests upon qualitative research, often engaged in projects approaching religious subjects from a lived religion perspective. Robert Orsi noted that "religions arise from and refer back to discrete social and cultural worlds and they are inevitably shaped by the structures and limits of these worlds as they engage them. This is the dialectic of religion, which takes place within and in complex relationship with the dialectics of culture."[17] Orsi points out the very interaction between social and cultural worlds and religious practice I hope to engage through an inductive qualitative approach, which will examine both the quotidian experiences of religious participants and the contexts in which those experiences occur.

Empirical studies, both qualitative and quantitative, on the subject of interfaith interaction have tended to focus on the *effects* of that interaction, rather than on questioning either its premises or its operant categories. In order to get at these questions, a method that allows participants to define and determine the categories of their action will prove more useful in exploring the way they effect the real world. Qualitative research, based upon emergent data, explicitly engages the voices of

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[17] Orsi, 171.

participants and a complex description and interpretation of the problem, as well as its contribution to a call for change.[18] It is perfectly suited to the work of inquiring deeper into the operating assumptions of interfaith interaction, especially as quantitative research is often not equipped to deal with the nuance and complexity of religious subjects and the cultural narratives, symbols, and understandings that drive their behavior. As Nancy Tatom Ammerman noted in her qualitative study, "religiosity in practice does not neatly conform to the survey questions with which we have tried to explain religion's presence or absence, rise or decline."[19]

For this project, I intend to employ a grounded theory approach in which the researcher "moves beyond description" to "generate or discover a theory, a 'unified theoretical explanation' (Corbin & Strauss, 2007, p.107) for a process or an action."[20] Thus, it builds a theory based on emergent repeated themes from the data themselves. This method is "generally regarded as one of the first methodologically systematic approaches to qualitative inquiry."[21] Though I neither aspire to or find plausible a grand unified theory, identifying a smaller scale theory about the operating premises and rhetoric of interfaith interaction is certainly possible.

I will carry out extensive in-depth interviews with 12-20 participants over the age of eighteen. The participants will be religious leaders from the Abrahamic traditions

[18] John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design : Choosing among Five Approaches*, ed. John W. Creswell, 3rd ed. ed. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles : SAGE Publications, 2013).

[19] Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life*Oxford University Press, 2013), 6.

[20] Creswell, 83.

[21] Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 2nd ed. ed. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles : SAGE, 2013), 51.

(Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) involved in the decision-making process for their self-identified religious community's or organization's engagement in interfaith interaction. In some cases, this may mean being credentialed with ordination, licensing, or educational certification, while in others lay or voluntary leadership is sufficient. Military, hospital, and college chaplains, who often serve outside their specific religious community are also helpful participants as their work is often necessarily interfaith-oriented due to the religiously non-specific nature of their places of operation. The most important criterion is to interview people who are representative of their community's or organization's position on interfaith interaction. I will use a snowball sampling method, gaining new participants from networks of preliminary subjects.

These interviews will all be coded and analyzed in the hopes of discovering thematic convergences pointing to the underlying categories and assumptions of interfaith interaction. I suspect that I will encounter certain themes, though I do not by any means assume these are exhaustive or incontestable. First, I believe that many participants will reveal a reliance on the use of humanistic or humanitarian language, emphasizing the connections between all peoples regardless of religious affiliation. Such a reliance is, I believe, the result of a cultural Christianity which has made this rhetoric common place for Westerners, to the point where it remains unquestioned. Second, I suspect I will find frequent usage of reconciliation or healing language, which may also be indebted to cultural Christianity and its proclivity for therapeutic language.

A third suspicion is that I will find anecdotal and linguistic evidence suggesting that interfaith interaction is widely based on the similarity- and contiguity-based comparison Jonathan Z. Smith condemns. Such common ground approaches can lead to shallower engagement and relationships which cannot bear long-lasting fruit. I am, however, also aware that the interviews may reveal deeper reasons for this type of approach that do indeed have more staying power than my previous observations would attest.

Against confirmation bias, I have been working with an expert to tailor my interview questions toward eliciting responses that are in participants' own words.[22] The questions are formed in such a way as to be open-ended and descriptive rather than leading. Also in aid of avoiding confirmation bias I will conduct brief follow-up interviews with participants in order to engage in member-checking, ensuring that what I have heard and interpreted from their comments is indeed what they intended to say and not my own projection.

Limitations:

As with all qualitative research of a small sample size, I will not be able to widely generalize a perfect unified theory to explain all interfaith interaction. However, the theorizing I am able to do from my sample will, I hope, be able to identify important concepts and categories understood by many practitioners of interfaith dialogue in the United States. This project will necessarily leave unexplored many avenues that absolutely require future research. As I am trying to elucidate the underlying

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[22] See Appendix A, "Interview Questions/Prompts."

assumptions and principles of interfaith interaction, I will be starting with bigger picture approaches that look for larger themes, rather than a deep exploration of particular factors, like race, gender, or class on the ways people engage interfaith projects.

Proposed Chapters:

1. *Introduction and Summary of Problem*: In this first chapter, I will introduce the interdisciplinary nature of the project, situating my hypothesis within both the more empirical Social Sciences and the more theoretical Religious Studies. I will examine the goals of interfaith interaction and suggest possible impediments to those goals in the unexamined categories on which such interaction operates.

2. *Literature Review*: Because I will be engaging in qualitative research, it is important to engage in the traditional literature review chapter that summarizes previous research and identifies holes in that research. The literature review will be somewhat untraditional because it will also incorporate research from postcolonial theory and comparative religion on the problematic nature of the category of religion itself. I will also include preliminary explorations of the literature provided by various interfaith programs and organizations in conversation with theoretical and empirical research out of both the Social Sciences as well as Religious Studies.

3. *Methodology*: The methodology chapter will explain my choice of qualitative inquiry and justify its suitability to the project as a way of shedding light on the reality of and shortcomings within current interfaith practices. I will describe the grounded theory qualitative approach and explain the inductive method of research, which allows categories of analysis to emerge from the data. Here I will also point out the actual processes involved in carrying out the research.

4. *Key Themes and Findings*: This chapter (which will most likely become multiple chapters to give focus to each of the main emergent themes/categories) will

elucidate the results of my interviews, reporting participant experiences and noting the most relevant concepts that appeared throughout. The findings chapter(s) will also begin to place emergent themes in relation to the status-quo Christian culture I am attempting to interrogate.

5. *Analysis*: After engaging findings on a surface level, this chapter will explore more deeply the underlying concepts which may have contributed to those emergent themes. It is here that I anticipate discussing the historical context out of which the underlying assumptions of interfaith interaction developed.

6. *Implications*: The implications chapter will provide a chance to discuss the results in light of extant models and theories of interfaith interaction, pointing out where this interaction falls short of its goals, if indeed it does. The chapter will also allow for speculation and suggestions for further research.

7. *Conclusion*: In the concluding chapter, I will revisit my original hypothesis and describe both the journey of the research as well as how my perspective has changed over its course.

Bibliographic Method:

The growing bibliography of this project has developed over three years of coursework and comprehensive exams in the fields of Postcolonial Studies, Sociology of Religion, and Comparative Religion. With the incorporation of materials from the emergent field of Interfaith/Interreligious Studies, the bibliography has become quite interdisciplinary, relying on both theoretical and empirical analysis to support the exploration of my hypothesis.

Much of my preliminary research has been done within the University of Denver's Penrose Collection and Iliff School of Theology's Taylor Library collections. Using the general search engine Summon -- now Compass -- I used various keyword and Boolean operators to find relevant books, articles, and other pertinent resources. Examples of these initial searches include *interfaith* and *interreligious* in combination with other terms relevant to my dissertation topic: *dialog*, work, engagement, belief, ecumeni* "grounded theory," theoretical, postcolonial, decoloni*, hegemon*, doubt, debunk*, America*, and Christian*.* In addition to these searches around interfaith interaction, I also employed keyword searches on *pluralism, multiculturalism,* and *interfaith*, knowing that these three words are often found in close connection with each other.

From these searches, I found useful catalog subject headings, including "interfaith," "interfaith dialogue," "religious pluralism," "multiculturalism – Religious aspects – Christianity," and "Sociology of Religion." I also engaged in author searches of those public figures, social scientists, and theologians who have contributed to the literature about interfaith interaction, including (but not limited to) Eboo Patel, Matthew

Mayhew & Alyssa Rockenbach, Diana Eck, and Catherine Cornille. I have also

expanded my bibliography by looking at the citations of pivotal and seminal articles

within the various fields represented in my topic.

The Compass search tool also allows for more directed searches of the many

databases to which the libraries subscribe, including Academic Search Complete and

GoogleScholar. Given the subject matter of my dissertation, I focused my searches in

the SocINDEX and PsycINFO databases for the social science literature, and in the

ATLA Religion database (through Iliff) for religious studies literature. I also searched

within the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database in order to ensure that my

particular topic hadn't already been explored. Within these databases, I repeated the

keyword combinations and Boolean operators mentioned above.

Finally, I also utilized InterLibrary Loan and Prospector to access those books

and articles not readily available through DU or Iliff. I also relied upon the Religious

Studies LibGuides, Religious Studies Reference Librarian Peggy Keeran, and Social

Work Reference Librarian Jenny Bowers to ensure a robust and detailed bibliography.

APPENDIX A

Project Title: Religiosity and Interfaith Interaction: Toward a Unified Theory
Principal Investigator: Teresa Crist
DU IRB Protocol #: 817228-1
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Interview Questions/Prompts
(Note: These questions are meant to evoke responses to the research question. Questions of clarification or further explanation may be added as the interview proceeds.)

1. Please describe the values and beliefs of your religious community and/or denomination.

2. On a three-point scale of HIGH, MEDIUM, or LOW, how would you rank the strength of your own religious conviction (your "religiosity")? Please explain your ranking.

3. How aligned are your own beliefs/convictions with those of your religious community or denomination?

4. How do you (as a religious leader or member of the clergy) advocate or oppose interfaith interaction? (Interfaith interaction is any kind of interaction with a religious Other or out-group. This might include institutional programming, service days in the geographic community, or even one-on-one interaction with a person outside your own religious tradition.)

5. Describe the impetus or the original reasons of your community to participate in interfaith interaction. Include: who (person or group or association) was the most encouraging proponent and how?

6. What models/programs were sought out, if any? (If none, how did you create your own?)

7. Answer either:

    a) If interfaith interaction is NOT encouraged: What words, phrases, or descriptions do you use to frame or explain interfaith activities? How do you justify such explanations?

    b) If interfaith interaction IS encouraged: What words, phrases, or descriptions do you use to frame or explain interfaith activities? How do you justify such explanations?

8. Describe how you see the religious "other" (members of religious out-groups).

    a) If negative, how so? How do your beliefs and values support this position?

    b) If positive, how so? How do your beliefs and values support this position?

9. What do you hope to accomplish by your position on interfaith interaction? (e.g. conversion, prosociality, mutual respect and coexistence?)

10. What sort of advice do you give to congregants/members when they come to you with issues surrounding interfaith interactions? Can you think of a time when a community member or congregant came to you about interfaith interaction and can you describe that conversation? What advice did you leave them with?

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